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SYNOPSIS ON

TEACHING OF TENSES TO ARAB LEARNERS

Submitted to:

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Topic: Teaching of Tenses to Arab Learners

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Grammar is a central mechanism of language. It allows one to use language precisely and effectively. Tenses are one of the very significant grammatical units in English, which play a pivotal role in communication. Therefore it has been given a lot of importance in the teaching of English as a foreign language or second language. Like all other tensed languages, tenses in English are also an arbitrary system and that is why the learners of English as foreign language or second language face many problems in learning them. Mastering tenses is one of the significant aspects of learning a language.

a) <u>Rationale and Significance of the Study</u>

English is taught mostly as a foreign language in the Arab World. Generally Arab students do not have a good communicative competence. This is also true of the students studying at English Language Teaching Institute of Symbiosis. Here the students are from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Oman and Yemen. While teaching English at ELTIS, the researcher has observed that Arab learners face several problems with reference to the usage of Tenses. A lot of work has been carried out on the teaching of tenses; however exhaustive work has not been carried out with reference to Arab learners. The present study would be a modest attempt in this

direction. This would probably be the first full scale study of the teaching of Tenses to Arab Learners. It aims at identifying the problems that Arab learners have with respect to tenses in English and it also provides solutions to some of the problems. This study would also make some significant suggestions to teachers for teaching tenses effectively to Arab learners.

b) A Survey of Work Done in the Research Area and the Need for More Work

As mentioned earlier, a lot of work has been carried out on the teaching of tenses. For example, According to Joos(1964), the adult learners of English as a foreign language have problems with the verbs whose most usual lexical meanings are unsuited with the temporary aspect. This remark by Joos indicates that due attention needs to be paid to the distinction between the stative and the dynamic verbs in the teaching of tenses. Langacker(2001) makes an attempt to sketch pedagogical implications of the cognitive linguistic theory. He, too, like Bull(1968) and Meziani(1988), criticizes linguists in general for attempting to account for tense directly in terms of temporal relation between the actual time of speaking and the full duration of an imagined actual occurrence. Though he does not provide any direct and concrete solution to the problem of teaching tenses he believes that an understanding of how present tense really works must surely be relevant to the problem. Forrester(1968) provides a model for the teaching of tenses to the college entrants. He advises teachers to make their own adaptations of the time lines. This model is useful but lacks certain aspects. Drilling without understanding does

not assure any learning. Similarly, the writer should have separated modal auxiliaries from tenses as it may lead to confusion among students.

Saraswathi (1978) in her study focuses on the teaching of tenses besides other grammar units. She advises that the teaching of those units should be done along with the composition class to give learners the contextual reinforcement. Though, useful, the writer gives only a limited number of combinations sequences of tenses. An attempt would be made in this study to come up with more creative ways of teaching tenses. Veeraswamy(1983) provides a pedagogic grammar model for the teaching of tenses, which is based on the error analysis of the Telugu learners of English. She emphasizes drilling as the only technique for teaching tenses. According to D'Souza(1985),'The most effective method of establishing the abstract concepts' related to tenses 'would be to use the verb forms of the learner' native language as the basis for understanding the function of the English verb forms'(p.171.). Her approach comes very close to the grammar translation method. Agnihotri et al.(1988) in their substantial work on the errors of tenses by the Indian learners of English suggest a three-stage model for the teaching of tenses. Those stages can certainly prove useful at the introductory level and with some modification even at the intermediate level. Since the concern of the writers is to offer a sequence in the teaching, they hardly discuss the techniques and methods that may be employed. Aikten(1992) gives CASSIAL guideline that is Choose, Analyze, Sequence, Select, Identify context, Auxiliary material and Learner's errors. It, no doubt, is effective in teaching of tenses but the writer does not provide the order in which these guidelines may be used. Staskova(1994) in her article on the teaching of the English tenses and aspects highlights the notion of time in tenses, the classification of the verb

uses and significance of the temporal adverbials and clauses. However, the writer does not offer any final conclusions as to how the teaching of tenses should be done to facilitate better learning. Labade (2006) has offered insightful analysis of 'The Teaching of Tenses at the Undergraduate Level' but his target audience is different and so the research area selected is seen as a virgin field and the absence of previous research work similar to the proposed one is seen as a 'blessing in disguise', as the researcher can carry out her work objectively and with originality. It seems that work with reference to Arab learners has not been carried out.

C) **Aims and Objectives**

The aims of the present study are

(i) To conduct a pre-test for Arab learners

(ii) To identify the mistakes they have committed with reference to tenses

(iii) To suggest innovative and more efficient ways of teaching Tenses to Arab learners.

(iv) To study the possible causes of errors

(v) To conduct a post-test and find out if there is any substantial improvement in students' use of Tenses.

d) **Methodology of the present study**

In the initial stage of the research work, a pre-test on the usage of Tenses will be given to the students studying at English Language Teaching Institute of Symbiosis, Pune. In order to make the study more representative students will be taken from different countries of the Arab World. Their level will be Pre- Intermediate level. There will be 40 students. The number is kept limited so as to enable the researcher to pay attention to each individual student. The present research is an action based research. Comparative analysis of the Pre-Test and the Post-Test will be shown. Wherever relevant, statistical analysis will be made for the purposes of tabulation, classification and comparison. Some activities will be used to teach the different aspects of tenses.

e) **Chapterization**

The following is the plan of chapterization in the thesis.

Chapter l- The status of English in Arab Countries

Chapter ll- The English Tense System

Chapter lll- The Teaching of Tenses to Arab Learners

Chapter lv- Pedagogical implications of the study

Chapter v- Conclusions

The first chapter presents the concept of English as an international language and its significance in the Arab world. The chapter then undertakes to present the scenario of the teaching of English in Arabic speaking countries, which leads to the key concern of the present study, i.e. **T**eaching of Tenses to Arab Learners. It provides the analysis of the students' performance in the Pre-Test and then analyses the errors of tenses in form and function. The third chapter points out the activities carried out by the

researcher to teach tenses effectively and this is followed by the post-test. The chapter presents an analysis of the post-test through its comparison with the results of the pre-test. The fourth chapter entitled pedagogical implications would provide suggestions to the teachers of English while teaching tenses to Arab learners. The Fifth chapter presents the conclusions drawn by the researcher and it gives a list of recommendations for teachers and researcher.

Though some observations have been made about the difficulties that Arab learners face in learning tenses, the reasons for their difficulties have not been identified. The present study aims at identifying some of the reasons.

It is felt that this study would make a valuable contribution to the field of ELT, as it would address the problems of Arab learners with reference to the usage of tenses, and it would also provide some solutions to their problems.

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